

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act

August 6, 2010

Today we celebrate the 45th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, one of the most historic and groundbreaking pieces of legislation in our Nation's history. For those who marched bravely, who worked tirelessly, who shed their blood and gave their lives in the pursuit of freedom for every American, the Act served as the culmination of decades of work to fulfill America's promise. And for the members of the Moses generation, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, who stood alongside President Johnson when he signed the bill into law, it was an affirmation that although the arc of the moral universe may be long, it bends toward justice.

The Voting Rights Act guaranteed African Americans the right to vote at a time when thousands were being disenfranchised across the country. It extended the protection of our Constitution to every citizen regardless of race or religion, color or creed. And in the 45 years since it was passed, the Act has been reaffirmed four times, each one a reminder that we must remain vigilant in guaranteeing access to the ballot box.

As we pause to reflect on the anniversary of that historic moment, I encourage every American to honor the legacy of the brave men and women who came before us, from the foot soldiers to the Freedom Riders, by exercising the rights they fought so hard to guarantee. And together let us recommit ourselves, in ways large and small, to continuing their journey to promote equality and perfect our Union.

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